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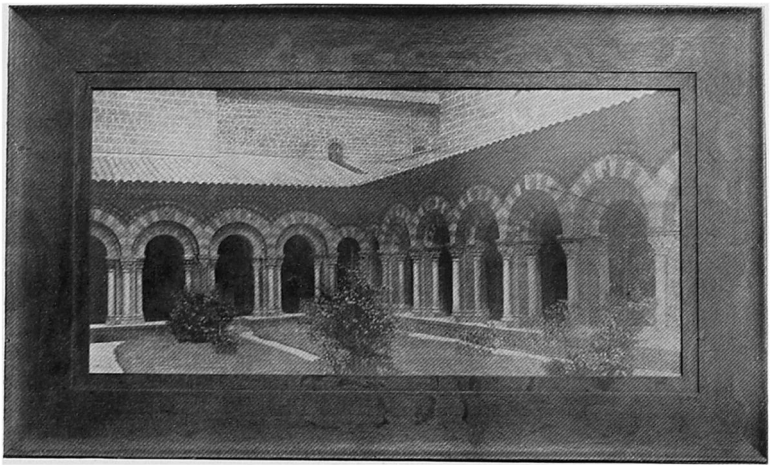
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CLOISTERS  
By H. Wells

## WOOD-POINTS, A NOVELTY IN PICTORIAL ART

A new and altogether effective form of pictorial art has been invented, and in large measure perfected, by Mr. Harry Wells, of Chicago, who gives to his etching-like product the fairly appropriate name of "wood-points." These striking pictures are virtually dry-points on wood. The difference between them and the ordinary dry-point familiar to the art student is, that while in the latter the drawing is engraved on metal in reverse for the purpose of giving an impression on paper, in the former the drawing is engraved direct and remains the finished picture, the lines being stopped with a wood-filler of the desired color, and the surface of the wood being subsequently polished.

The effect produced is one of unusual beauty, having all the delicacy of an etching and all the beauty of tone of which a properly finished wood surface is capable. In a word, the picture is simply an engraving on a close-grained wood, like white holly, the lines being brought out by the use of a slightly colored wood-filler, and the whole drawing being buried under the polished surface.

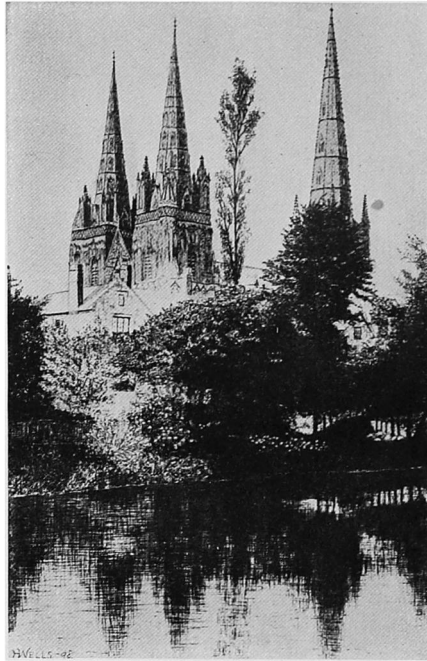
This work has been purely a matter of love on the part of Mr. Wells, who has not sought to make a commercial product of his art. Indeed, these wood-points would seem destined for the connoisseur, and not for the general public, since the work involved in the production of one of these pictures would preclude their being offered for sale at prices that the average picture-lover would be inclined to

pay. The production of every picture involves as much care, time, and work as the cutting of a copperplate. After the engraving is finished there is the stopping of the lines with the colored wood-filler, and the polishing of the surface so as to bring out the beauties alike of the wood and of the drawing. When the whole process is completed the artist has a wood-plate, beautiful in itself, but without reproductive possibilities, which must ever stand alone. To duplicate the picture would mean to duplicate the plate in its entirety.

This form of art work, which is as unique as its results are beautiful, is entirely original with Mr. Wells, and the history of his enterprise and the details of his work can, perhaps, best be told in his own words. Said he, when asked to explain his new form of art to the readers of *BRUSH AND PENCIL*:

"In 1894 I made my first efforts in this direction, being led to it while experimenting with different light antique shades of a high-grade wood-filler on quarter-sawed white oak. The filler used has a transparent quartz base—ground in oil and japan to a paste—which is thinned with turpentine and applied to the wood with a brush. As soon as it 'sets,' or the gloss leaves it—in about five or ten minutes—it is wiped off by rubbing across the grain and packing the pores full, thus leaving the surface clean. In filling oak, often a very little color is added to the filler. Such particles of color as collect in the open pores show dark through the transparent base without the filler being strong enough in color to stain the harder parts of the oak. This brings out the endless variety of the grain without materially darkening the wood.

"It occurred to me that if I took some close-grained wood, like hard maple or white holly, and cut or scratched a design on the sur-



LITCHFIELD CATHEDRAL  
By H. Wells

face of it, and then filled it as stated above, the filler would take in the cuts, as in the open pores of oak, without staining the general surface of the hard wood, thus bringing out the design. Accordingly, I drew a simple outline of a clover-leaf on a small piece of hard



LION, AFTER VAN MUVDEN  
By H. Wells

maple. Then with a sharp-pointed penknife I cut the penciled lines. Finally I sandpapered off the pencil marks so that no lines were visible except by close inspection. When filled as I have just explained, the design came out sharp and clear. From that I attempted more elaborate sketches, copying at first etchings or wood-engravings that were simple in design, working later from photographs.

"As unfinished wood soils easily, it is necessary to protect it in

some way, so I varnish my panels, giving four or five coats, and finish them by rubbing down to a piano polish. It of course takes a long time to get the finished result. The most permanent varnishes are slow drying, and require about a week or two between coats to insure durability. Panels can be finished in shellac and the French polish in a few days, but this work requires an expert. I find little French polishing done in this country, though I understand it is prevalent in England.

"In developing the process and in getting different effects I have used other means and accessories. The filler is sometimes used more strongly colored on some parts of a panel than on others, as, for instance, where deep tones and masses of color are required. But when clear lines against a white background are desired I use filler weak in color. Sometimes I shellac the margin of a panel before filling, to keep it clean, and fill the center to give the effect of an etching with a white margin. After filling the panel I bring out the high lights by scraping with the blade of a knife or by sandpapering the surface.

"While, as in etching, it is difficult to remove lines once cut, they can be reduced by scraping. It is easy, however, after the first filling, to add further lines, rubbing on more filler and touching up in this way. For very deep tones, or where marked contrast is desired, I use water stains or wood dyes before filling, brushing them on carefully where needed, and using, of course, a color similar to the shade of the filler to be used afterward. Stain should not be applied too freely, as it may 'run' in the grain.

"In cutting I use an ordinary jack-knife, with a long, narrow blade, which I keep ground to a very sharp point. Over the blade I place a small piece of rubber tubing. Thus I hold the knife and blade as I would hold a pencil. The cutting is done in the direction of the cutting edge of the blade, turning the blade with the curved



WAGNER, AFTER LENBACH  
By H. Wells



THE SORCERESS, AFTER F. S. CHURCH

By H. Wells

lines. When necessary, the panel is turned. I have tried a perfectly round needle point, but this tears the fiber of the wood when scratching across the grain. Only a very limited width of line can be obtained by a single cut. When the effect of a very wide line is desired, I make many small cuts close together, and this gives a softer effect than a single cut made too deeply.

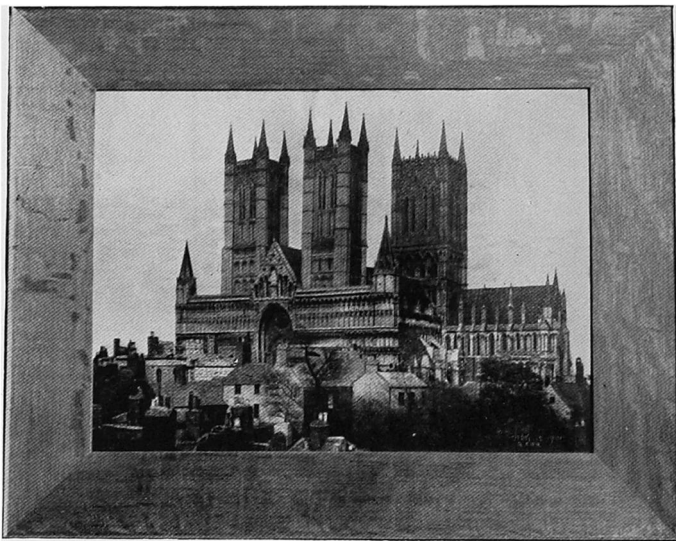
"As in etching, it is desirable that for distant parts of a picture the lines should be cut lightly and near together, and in the foreground, more heavily and farther apart. For deep tones I cross-cut in several directions, taking care when cutting in any one direction to keep the blade at the same angle so as to prevent cutting out any portion of the wood. One disadvantage in the process is, that the cutting leaves no color, and one has to use judgment as to the depth of line and the pressure used in cutting. The cutting, however, raises a 'bur' on the wood, which can be easily seen when the light is at just the right angle, coming from the left across the panel.

"As my business keeps me occupied by day, I have cut nearly all my panels by lamplight, and have found in the work recreation and pleasure. On account of getting the light more easily in the right position, and all from one direction, I can often work more easily by lamplight than by day, and with less weariness to the eyes. If desired the design can be penciled, or drawn pretty fully before cutting, as the pencil marks, as well as the 'bur' raised by cutting, are well removed with fine sandpaper before filling. It is always an interesting part of the process to do the filling and to see the design come out when the filler is wiped off.

"When the panel is thus filled and properly touched up, and the high lights are brought out by scraping or sanding, it is ready for varnishing. The colors used are thus all even with or below the surface of the wood, and are especially permanent. Varnish slightly yellows white holly, giving it a soft, old ivory appearance that is often pleasing. When carefully finished the varnish should last from fifteen to twenty years without cracking or deterioration, and then the panel could, if necessary, be scraped and revarnished. I have scraped off a panel where the varnish has been marred—removing apparently all the old varnish—and revarnished it without in any way injuring the picture.

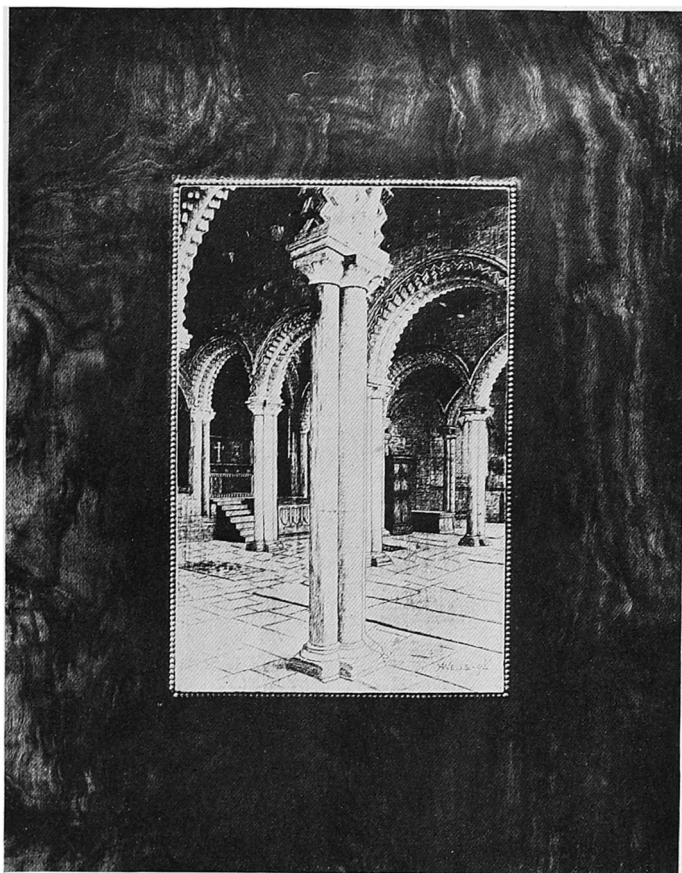
"Some friends have suggested that the panels just as filled, without any varnish, might be softer in finish, and they have suggested further keeping the pictures under glass to keep them from soiling. However, when properly finished and polished, the panels have a soft effect as of an etching under glass. In fact, many have thought some panels that I have simply set in frames had glass over them. When first varnished with a single coat, owing to the uneven surface and consequent deflection of light, the varnish seems objectionable, but when fully finished with several coats and polished, this objection is overcome, and the pictures then have a soft, mellow surface.

"As I have never taken a lesson in drawing, I have naturally



LINCOLN CATHEDRAL  
By H. Wells

copied most of my pictures. Of late, as I enjoy particularly architectural subjects, I have done a good many panels in this line. As I work these up from photographs, bringing them more or less into



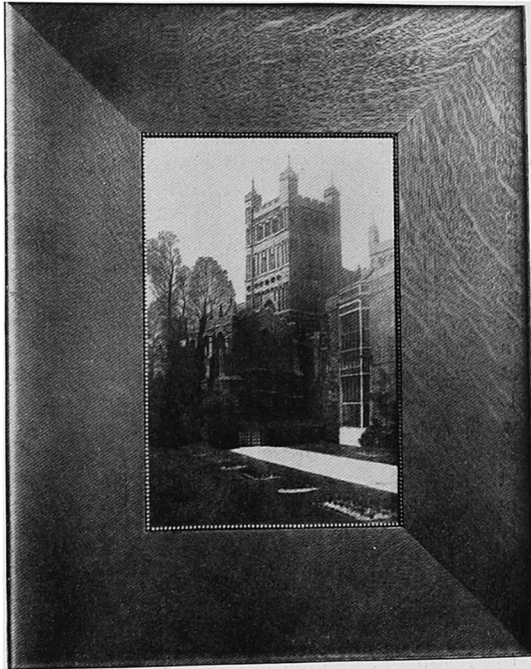
GALILEE CHAPEL, DURHAM CATHEDRAL  
By H. Wells

line or etching effect, and endeavor to obtain more artistic effects of light and shade, I take the liberty of calling these 'originals.' The work of F. S. Church has always been especially delightful to me, and I have taken the liberty of copying many of his idyllic pictures, such as 'Knowledge is Power,' 'The Battle of the Sirens,' 'Pandora,'



'Subdued,' and 'The Sorceress.' Where panels are not too large I often mount them on larger finished boards of mahogany or figured woods. All my work in this line has been in the way of pictures to hang on the wall, with the exception of a few book-covers which I have decorated."

Of the wood-cuts herewith reproduced, "The Sorceress," after F. S. Church, is simply cut and filled, using a filler more strong in color on the darker parts. "The Lion," after Van Muiden, is cut and filled only, using a filler very weak in color in the outer portion and strong in color in the darker portions. "Wagner," after Lenbach, has the cap and darker portions cross-cut strongly, and is colored with water stain brushed on. Then it is filled, using filler weak in color on the face. "Litchfield Cathedral," after cutting, has water stain worked in with a small brush; the sky is mostly shellacked before filling, to



EXETER CATHEDRAL  
By H. Wells

keep it white, and is filled with a fairly strongly colored filler. In "Galilee Chapel, Durham Cathedral," some water stain is used; and the filler is used stronger in color in some parts than in others.

Mr. Wells is exceptionally clever in the mounting of his panels. Some of them he frames with wide, flat moldings, and others he glues to the surface of pieces of wood capable of fine grain effects in finishing. In either case he selects woods that harmonize with the tone of the panels. When a molding is used, one of dead surface is selected; and when a plain mount is employed, the wood is finished in the same way as the panel itself.

EDGAR J. HURLBUT.